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Department of Health and Family Services

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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TO: Hospitals
Local Health Departments
Tribal Health Centers
Regional Officer Directors
Infection Control Professionals

RE: Public Health Issues for Hurricane Katrina Evacuees

Common conditions seen among evacuees include burns, hairline fractures, and infected cuts. Sporadic cases of diarrheal disease and respiratory illness including pertussis have also been reported.

In response to the imminent arrival of evacuees in Wisconsin DPH recommends the following:

Laboratory Testing

1. No special laboratory screening tests are recommend unless the evacuee is acutely ill (no screening for enteric bacteria, ova and parasite, tuberculosis, etc)
2. Those evacuees that are acutely ill with diarrheal illness, burns, infected cuts/wounds or respiratory illness should be screened.
 - Laboratory specimens Must be sent to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH).
 - Laboratory requisitions Must be labeled "Evacuee"

Reasons:

- The WSLH will test specimens free of charge
- Testing and results are easier to track at the WSLH
- In addition to testing for "common" pathogens, specimens will be tested for pathogens common in the southern states such as vibrio species

Immunization

1. No additional immunizations are currently recommended including Hepatitis A
2. Schools: The Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Act of 2002 requires schools to enroll students even if they do not have required documents, such as immunization or medical records. There is no 30 day limit on submitting records for homeless students.
3. Day Care Centers: Children have 6 calendar weeks before they are required to produce immunization records. Children should be enrolled and daycare staff should work with

LHD's to facilitate getting immunization records in a timely manner. Children should not be denied enrollment if immunization records are not available.

Pets:

Some people fleeing the disaster may bring their pets with them. The potential of injury (bites/scratches) from animals being in a strange, possibly crowded, environment probably outweighs any risk of zoonotic disease transmission from these animals. If a host family cannot accommodate visitor's pets, the local humane society or animal shelter should be contacted about boarding the animal.

It is unlikely that there will be any way to document rabies immunization status for these animals, unless they are wearing a current rabies vaccination tag. Therefore, a bite from a dog, cat, or ferret whose rabies vaccination status is not verifiable must be treated as a bite from an unvaccinated animal (i.e., a 10 day quarantine in an isolation facility is indicated).

Red Cross

It is recommended to verify that evacuees are registered with the Red Cross

Until further notice, the DPH will staff the Emergency Operations Center, located at 1 West Wilson Street in Madison Wisconsin. The EOC will be open from 7AM -7PM, seven days a week. Communicable disease questions regarding evacuees of Hurricane Katrina should be forwarded to the EOC staff at (608) 266-2670 or (608) 261-9323.

As a reminder, e-mail inquiries should be addressed to dphemergency@dhfs.state.wi.us

Additional information will be distributed as needed.